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## Rep. Coble Under Fire for Camps Comment

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) -- Rep. Howard Coble, attempting to clarify remarks he made last week, said Monday the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II was wrong and should not be repeated.

"I regret that many Japanese and Arab-Americans found my choice of words offensive because that was certainly not my intent," Coble, R-N.C., said.

A colleague, Rep. Mike Honda, D-Calif., said Coble "still missed the point."

"He may have appeared to apologize for offending people with his words, but what's offensive is he doesn't get it," Honda said in a telephone interview. "He doesn't understand why it was wrong for (President) Roosevelt to do it then."

On Feb. 4, Coble appeared on a radio call-in show in Greensboro and disagreed with a caller who said Arab-Americans should be sent to internment camps during the war on terrorism.

He added that the camps served the nation's security needs during WWII because a few Japanese-Americans might have been intent on harming America, "just as some Arab-Americans are probably intent on doing us harm today."

Coble said it was "a very, very cruel thing to do" to Japanese-Americans but that he believed the decision was right for those times.

Besides removing a possible security threat, the government sought to protect Japanese-Americans from harm by other Americans seething about Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, Coble said.

On Monday, Coble said he was trying to show that Roosevelt made a decision that he believed was in the best interest of national security, based on the circumstances at the time and the information available.

"Today we can certainly look back and see the damage that was caused because of this decision," Coble said. "We all now know that this was in fact the wrong decision and an action that should never be repeated."

An official with the Japanese American Citizens League, who last week called on Coble to resign as the subcommittee's chairman, said he wasn't satisfied with the lawmaker's clarification.

"His comment today was to say he regretted offending us," said John Tateishi, the group's national executive director. "But it's not an apology for what he said."

Coble has said he won't resign and a spokeswoman said Monday he has not changed his mind.

Honda, a Japanese-American who spent his early childhood with his family in an internment camp during World War II, said he wasn't ready to ask Coble to resign until after he had spoken with him.

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